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CHRIST AND OURSELVES

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Christ and Ourselves

By
Richard Roberts

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93 Chancery Lane, W.C.

PREFACE

THIS little book contains four addresses. Of these the last three were delivered to a company of students at the University of Liverpool, at whose instance they are now printed. They were not spoken in the order in which they appear here. The last two came first. In consequence of what I gathered in personal interviews after these addresses had been given, I judged that the presuppositions upon which they were based were by no means clear. I therefore used the only remaining opportunity of addressing the students for the purpose of explicating some of the ground which underlay the practical appeal of the two earlier addresses. This third address appears in the book as second. In the personal interviews referred to, I encountered much enquiry and difficulty regarding the person of Jesus Christ, and the substance of what I endeavoured to say on these occasions to various people is embodied

in the first address, which had been delivered at the Students' Conference at Swanwick in July 1914. The following pages fall therefore into two divisions. The first and second addresses contain a general statement of the presuppositions upon which the practical appeal of the third and fourth rest.

Save only for a few minor changes here and there, the addresses are printed much as they were spoken. There is probably some value in preserving them in their spoken form—at any rate for those who heard them.

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Chapter I

GOD IN CHRIST

It is probably true that many people are hindered in their approach to Christ by a mistaken idea of the significance of the great traditional statements concerning Him. Most folk begin, no doubt, by accepting these statements in a more or less unquestioning way; but a time comes when they are exposed to an independent scrutiny, and the result is that one is bewildered and perplexed by their apparent inability to yield a satisfying and rational meaning. The Johannine statement, "The Word become flesh," once we have broken the bondage of old tradition and begin to use for ourselves the faculty of criticism, becomes cold and elusive. When we look at it in its bare abstract simplicity, it is difficult to make sense of it. The phrases in the Nicene Creed—"True God of true God, begotten and not made, of one substance with

the Father"—are a bewilderment and a perplexity. We speak of the Doctrine of the Incarnation, and while one sees that it means something, it is not easy to say with any real simplicity what it does mean. A little time ago a friend said to the present writer: "I stand for the Deity of Jesus Christ." "I expect," was the answer, "that essentially I stand for the same thing. But my trouble is that before I can say that I stand for the Deity of Jesus Christ, I must know beforehand what Deity is—and I don't. It is one thing to know God in experience; it is another thing to create, still another to describe a category called Deity. So far from knowing what Deity is and being therefore able to say that Jesus answers the description, I have hardly any working knowledge of God except what I have gained through my experience of Jesus Christ. And what I really *believe* about Jesus Christ is not what I say concerning Him, but what I do when I see Him—and what I have to do when I see Him is to fall down and worship Him."

This may perhaps help to indicate the real limitations of the great confessional statements

about Jesus Christ. It is our human frailty to have a great faith in phrases and labels, and to make the affirmation of verbal definitions the test of orthodoxy. But what we have to understand is that the creeds are simply endeavours to state in rational and coherent form certain truths of experience; and the truths of experience are always much greater than any thing that human speech can fully compass. All formulæ are approximations; they are the best we can do. They are good so far as they go, but they do not go very far. The best that we can say of Jesus Christ is not good enough. Our experience of Him is much greater than anything we can say concerning Him. And what really matters is a true attitude and a true relation to Jesus Christ. Thoreau says somewhere in a connection which I forget: "They ask for word and deed; when a right relation is both word and deed." If we can get the right relation to Jesus Christ, we may leave the definitions and the statements to look after themselves. Words are, after all, only symbols. They suggest rather than describe things. There is always that in our deepest experiences which

" breaks through language and escapes." The experience of Christ starts thoughts which are hardly to be packed in a narrow phrase.

> " In divinity and love
> What's best worth saying cannot be said."

And we must not make the mistake of approaching Christ through the creeds. It will be time enough to handle the creeds when we have encountered the Person. Let us forget abstract nouns and try to penetrate to that deep essential thing in the common human experience of Christ which the creeds try vainly to hold and to express.

I

Now you will observe that in spite of our view that our experience of Christ is greater than anything we can say concerning Him, greater things have been said about Christ than any other historical personage. We have already noticed some of them. But you do not need to go beyond the New Testament in order to see how language is strained to the uttermost in order to compass the truth concerning Him. " In Him," says St Paul,

" were all things created. All things have been created through and unto Him and in Him do all things cohere." " He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation." " In Him are all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom hidden." " The light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines upon us in the face of Jesus Christ." The writer of Hebrews speaks of Him as the express image of God's person and the effulgence of His glory. And the word which we quoted from the fourth Gospel goes on, " We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." One has the feeling that all this is grim and determined struggling with language; and one almost fancies that had these writers been asked if they had succeeded in capturing the whole inmost truth they felt about Christ, they would simply answer that the half was never told. And the ultimate truth about Jesus is to be found, not primarily in the Gospels, but outside of them, in the total impression which He has made upon the generations of men, in the whole human sense of Jesus.

What, then, is the nature of the impact of Jesus upon human experience ?

Let me point out that these New Testament statements which I have just quoted are chiefly concerned with one thing, the fact that Jesus Christ manifested God. That man has a sense of God is a proposition which it is not my business to argue ; and that the search for God has been the supreme quest and occupation of man is, I think, at bottom a truth which no man can reasonably question. He has been, ever since he began to think, seeking to beat his way through to some clue to the world, and he has been pretty sure that that clue lies somewhere in the Unseen. He has always been feeling after God, if haply he might find Him.

At the time of the Welsh Revival a friend of mine described to me an experience that came to him in these terms : " Before I used to pray to a blank space ; now I know there is a Father at the other end of my prayers." It is the first part of this statement I want you to observe. I think that word " a blank space " will raise an understanding echo in the minds of most of us. We feel and know

that God is there—somewhere; but I think that most of us will agree that when we have prayed it has been like talking to a person whom we did not know in a dark room.

Of course there are certain things we can infer concerning God. When we look upon His handiwork, we infer His intelligence and His power,

> " Conjecture of the Worker by the work.
> Is there strength there? Enough. Intelligence?
> Ample."

This cannot indeed be gainsaid. And we may even go further and infer from the moral demands which we recognise instinctively within ourselves that God has certain moral qualities. But this does not carry us very far. What we require, and what we must have, is some kind of personal outline to fill in the blank space.

Mankind has been busier at no task than it has been in the endeavour to fill in this blank space, to which the feeling after God led it. There were times when men felt that God was other than, and different from, themselves,

and they located Him in trees, in mother-earth, and worshipped Him in the form of animals. At other times they felt that God was man writ large, and they gave their gods human form. But they were never able to imagine a god large enough to fill the canvas and so they peopled it with a race of gods. They took a step in advance when they began to conceive of God as mind; but they passed from that into abstractions and bewildering talk about the Idea, the Logos, the Absolute and the like. They put God up in the clouds far beyond men's reach. The human endeavour to realise God has either made God contemptible or inaccessible. One found a god whom one could not worship, either because he was too far beneath or too far removed from him. No truer word was ever spoken than Paul's, "The world by wisdom found not God." No exercise of natural faculty can bring us to Him—else the world would have found Him long ago.

Will you let me continue my argument from this point by telling you my own experience? I had been brought up from my earliest youth to regard the Bible as the

revelation of God. But artificial views of the Bible prevented me from seeing the real significance of this fact. A mechanical theory of Inspiration blinded me to the real relations and the comparative value of the Old and New Testaments, and it was only when I was thoroughly emancipated from this bondage that I came to understand the Bible at all. A time came when I was able to let the Bible tell me its own story, to read it simply and directly as I would another book. This did not come all at once, of course, and it was well that it should be so. The Bible gradually came to be invested with a new and unexpected living quality. It sank into me in a new way. I don't know that in thus reading it I was making a definitely conscious search after anything; but I do remember a time coming when, after absorbing the Gospels, the figure of Jesus Christ came to take shape as a definite, complete personality.

I think I must first have realised Him in His setting—that is, as a Galilean peasant of high ideals and unblemished conduct, with a noble teaching and a unique individuality. But He presently came to stand out of the

pages as something different; He emerged out of His setting and seemed to tower up in a strange, dominant, absolute way. He ceased to be a mere historical figure; He began to have a curious and thrilling immediacy; He seemed to have become independent of history. He grew on me, He grew over me; seemed to come and to stand over against me. I do not know that I analysed the impression He made on me. First, I know that I admired Him; then I wondered at Him; and then I worshipped Him. That is to say—I took up to Him the one attitude of mind which is distinctly and exclusively the due of God. And what had happened was simply that He had come to stand in and to fill what was before a blank space. Then I understood what that word meant—"He that seeth Me seeth the Father," and that other, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." He filled the blank space in every part; it became luminous with His countenance. And this is the impression which Jesus has always made upon those who have looked upon Him without prejudice; and this, I think, is that core of experience which lies behind our credal state-

ments and definitions of the Person of Christ. This is essentially what the New Testament writers say of Him. You may go to the Nicene Creed, or the Formula of Chalcedon, or the Augsburg Confession to see how men have defined and placed the Person of Christ, and you may think them right or wrong. But what we have to reckon with is the circumstance that hundreds and thousands of men and women in every generation since His day have had a sense of His significance to their lives which they could express only by worshipping Him as God, that when they thought of God they thought of Jesus, and that it was the face of Jesus they saw when they prayed to God. They saw the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

II

But perhaps some of you will be saying that this process does not necessarily involve a doctrine of Incarnation. Is not this simply the deification of a man? Well, to begin with, you have to remember that this is the only man who has been found capable of

deification in this permanent and universal way, and that is a fact of great significance. But there is another set of circumstances which we must consider at this point.

I do not know that I can introduce (and summarise) these circumstances in a better way than by a quotation from Rudolf Eucken : "How came it to pass that this particular point of life" (*i.e.* the life of Jesus) "was the fountainhead of so mighty a movement, that old ideals were shattered and new ones arose, that the whole previous balance of life was upset and previous standards failed to satisfy, that a mighty longing took possession of mankind, a stormy unrest which even now after hundreds of years is not allayed?" That is to say, if we are to understand the real inwardness of the coming of Jesus into the world, we have to consider it in the light of its historical consequences.

It would take us too far afield to consider these historical consequences in detail. If you want to realise the extraordinary variety and extent of the influence of Jesus upon law, social life, public morality, and personal relationships, you will find a good deal in a

book called "Gesta Christi," by C. L. Brace. But these results are outward and concrete manifestations of a new stream of influence in human life, and it will be more to the point if we enquire into the particular character of the stream itself. Let us examine it at its source.

That the early Christians saw the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ we have already seen. But this was not all. They felt that through their relation to Him they had become redeemed souls, and that this redemption was connected with the death of Jesus; and further, they believed that Jesus was risen and lived—lived at the right hand of God to make intercession for them, and in their own hearts to complete their salvation. Now, I am not going to unravel the threads of this belief. It is enough for our purpose that the early Christians recognised that the impact of Jesus on their lives was that of a Redeemer. They thought of Him primarily, not as a teacher or a prophet, but as a *doer*, as one who had *wrought* something. He was to them Redeemer and Saviour.

And this is also a permanent character; and it is this word Redeemer which most fitly describes His effect upon the generations that have followed Him. The history of His influence upon the world is the history first of personal and then of social transformations. The history of mankind left to itself is a history of degeneracy. Man standing alone tends to relapse through barbarism to that animal condition from which the long travail of the evolutionary process has lifted him. That is a universal truth, and that is the truth which underlies the Doctrine of the Fall; whether you accept the Garden of Eden or not, you cannot get away from the fact which it symbolises, namely, that man left to himself falls away from himself,—not only individual, but collective man. What the power of Christ has done is to arrest that drift, yes and to reverse it, and set mankind again upon the upward way.

Now I have no doubt that there will be found those who would attribute this change to that general progress which is supposed to be afoot in human affairs. We have somehow (I suppose as a by-product of our necessary

surrender to ideas of evolution) got into the way of conceiving of human progress as a sort of inevitable and irresistible push upward, and that Christianity is a mere incident in this splendid cosmic climb. But observe two points—first, that you get continuous ethical progress only where Christianity is at work; and secondly, that the kind of progress which we moderns think so wonderful, progress in mechanical invention and in things on the outside of life, its mere appanages and perquisites, that is, a purely material progress, tends to moral deterioration. Japan is a case in point. Japan has made any amount of progress in material and temporal things, but it has been gained at the expense of the loosening of moral sanctions. There is no predestinate progress inherent in human nature as it stands. Materials of progress there certainly are; but there is no native impulse upward. It is all the other way—to externality, to materialism, to moral degeneracy. And wherever you find real progress in culture and morality you will find that the stimulus has been applied from without. And what we find is that wherever Christianity exists

as a vital force, it checks the native downward drift of human nature. Of course you may urge against this the large elements of paganism which still infect our Christian civilisation. Yet, on the other hand, you must consider what they might have been had it not been for Christianity; and remember this too, that in the making of man, nineteen centuries count for comparatively little. And I agree with Mr Houston Chamberlain when he says: "Even now Christianity is not yet firm on its childish feet; its maturity is hardly dawning on our dim vision. Who knows but a day may come when the blood, church-history of the first eighteen centuries of our era may not be looked upon as the history of the infantile diseases of Christianity." [1]

Yet you have to account for a great multitude of profound personal and social transformations through the Christian ages, for a continuous leavening of society with the Christian spirit, for great outbursts of redemptive power at many points in modern

[1] "Foundations of the Nineteenth Century," i. 174. I am quite sure that Mr Chamberlain does not understand Christianity; but this saying is none the less true.

history which have issued from the recognition of the saving power of the Cross. And I suggest to you that a redemptive act and process on this scale implies an intervention from without. There is indeed very little in antecedent history to explain the emergence of Jesus at that particular point. He seems to rise up abruptly on the depressed landscape of contemporary history; and you cannot square the appearance of Jesus with any theory of gradual historical development. His figure and its story seem to break across the normal historical order. It was not a continuation of any process hitherto in operation except only of the very slender and hardly discernible survival of the Hebrew tradition of prophetic piety. It was the appearance of a new positive universal energy of redemption in the world.

The only adequate interpretation of it is that it was the act of God. It was the direct intervention of God in the affairs of men in the person and work of Jesus Christ; and unless our thought is still so backward and antique that we conceive it impossible to think of God as acting outside His laws in the normal

order of life and history, this view of Jesus should not be impossible to us. And of course if God is in the bondage of His own laws not only is this view impossible, but religion itself becomes impossible in any real and vital sense.

Now the one question remaining is this: If God intervened in the affairs of men in Jesus Christ, then Jesus must be proved worthy of the character assigned to Him. He must Himself be a perfect revelation of God within the dimensions of human nature. He must, that is, fill the place of God in the lives of men. Jesus must give us in His own person and life a true impression of God. Now, does He do this? Well, I have already given you my answer. When I see Him, I fall down and worship Him and say, "My Lord and my God." And this is substantially the answer of all who have looked at Him with insight and understanding.

I am not concerned with getting hold of a satisfying doctrinal definition of the Person of Christ. If you will permit me to quote in a somewhat modified form what I have written elsewhere, let me say this: The

character and the power of the redemptive energy which has so affected the Western world and is still to-day at its work of transformation throughout the world, and that with as great vitality as it ever possessed, demands for its explanation the conception of a special intervention of God in the affairs of men at that point in history where the redemptive process began ; and the impression which Jesus has made upon the generations of men from that day to this is one which accords with the conception that in Him God did intervene redemptively in the affairs of men. That is to say, we are constrained to the idea of Incarnation, to the belief that Jesus Christ was God become man, the Word become flesh.

III

I am not trying to prove a dogma. What we see here is that the impression which the person of Jesus Christ makes upon the individual is consistent with the broad historical consequences of His life ; and that this conjunction is only to be explained by some such tremendous conception as the great

confessional statements seek to embody. But I wish to emphasise that the central and primary matter is the impression which Jesus makes on the individual. And here we are confronted with the difficulty that Jesus is a historical figure belonging to a long past age, and that the only impression which He can make upon us is that which is conveyed through the records of His life. Now it is no doubt true that the source of our knowledge of His personality is the Gospels ; but there is another factor of which some account must be taken. In the personal experience recounted above, as I look back upon it, there is a clear sense of something which was *given*—not reached by process of inference,—something which *came*. When Peter confessed Jesus to be Christ, Jesus said that it was not flesh and blood that had revealed that truth to him, but the Father in heaven. Connect with this two other passages, one of St John, "When the Paraclete is come, even the Spirit of truth, He shall bear witness of Me," the other of St Paul, "No man can say 'Jesus is Lord' save in the Holy Spirit." From which we infer that a true understand-

ing of Jesus Christ is ultimately an affair of revelation.

Consider for a moment the episode of Peter's confession. Jesus' first question was concerning the current popular opinion about Himself. The answer was that some thought He was Jeremiah, others Elijah, others one of the prophets. So far as it went, the popular judgment was sound and true enough. It put Jesus in the highest category it knew. It judged Him to be a prophet. But it was an external judgment. It was the judgment of natural faculty. But Peter's judgment was not of that order. "Not flesh and blood," that is, not natural faculty, "hath revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." The popular opinion was the product of reflection. Peter's confession was the product of revelation. The same distinction is made in the story of Nicodemus (which, whether it is the record of an actual historical encounter or not, represents the Apostolic view of the matter). The Rabbi was prepared to concede that Jesus was a divinely commissioned teacher—a judgment which was quite true so far as it went; but Jesus makes it

quite plain that before Nicodemus could know the whole inmost truth concerning Him, he must acquire a spiritual insight through a spiritual transformation.

The real understanding of Jesus Christ is still a matter of spiritual perception. As men in the light of natural faculty of old regarded Him as a prophet, so still in the same light they think of Him as a great teacher, a great moral personality, a great martyr. But this is plainly not the New Testament view, nor the traditional view of the Christian Society ; nor is it a view which explains historical Christianity.

The alternative is the view revealed to the sensitive spiritual perception, the vision which compels one to the knees saying, " My Lord and my God." That is the difference between the judgment which we pass on Jesus in the light of reason and that which we reach when we see Him in the revealing light of the Holy Spirit. And this revelation is denied to no man who seeks it and is ready to pay the price of it.

Note.—In discussions upon the matter in which I have engaged with a great many people, I find that

great difficulty is caused by what is called the " dual nature " of Jesus Christ. He is thought of as acting now in the character of God, and now in the character of man. This is of course a profound fallacy. It is obviously a very easy way out of some dilemmas in the Gospels, but it is a way we take at a terrible cost—the cost of putting an impassable gulf between Jesus and ourselves, and depriving His humanity of any real significance for ourselves. What this view amounts to is that Jesus is partly God and partly man ; whereas the truth is that He is wholly God and wholly man. He was a single personality, and whatever He said or did was the word or deed of the entire undivided personality. He did not now act as God, and now as man. The person Jesus had one will ; and it was this one will which determined His actions throughout.

God made man on His own image. That is the presupposition not only of religion, but of all rational knowledge. We have heard it said that God is man writ large. It would be truer to say that man is God writ small. In any case what is meant is that personality in man is identical in its essence with personality in God. God may be more than personal ; there may be another category higher than personality. If there is we do not know it. What we may assert is that God is at least personal in the sense in which we are personal. If, then, God chooses to come and live under the conditions of flesh and time and place, He will naturally and inevitably assume the personal human form. He will assume it in its perfection, of

course. But it will be a real humanity all the same, akin to our own. When the Word became flesh, the result was a real human personality. He was not half-human, half-divine, but wholly human, wholly divine. There was no division or separation within Him. The true description of Him is not that he was *God and man*, but that He was *God become man*. He was no mythological demi-god, but God-man.

Chapter II

CHRIST CRUCIFIED

Naturally the first, but certainly the least thing we say about the Cross is that it happened at a certain place on a certain day. The background of the Cross is not Jerusalem but the whole world; its date is not a certain day but all time. I remember hearing Dr Fairbairn many years ago say that "Calvary is an epitome of the world." It is even more than that. It is an epitome of two worlds, an epitome of God and of man. It is the whole truth of life, human and divine, focussed down to one intense point of light. Dr Forsyth uses of the Cross an epithet which I think is profoundly true. He speaks of it as being "superhistoric." There is a certain quality of timelessness and immediacy in it for every man who looks understandingly upon it; and it becomes to us, as it has been to every age, the clue to the inter-

pretation of history and of our own personal lives.

The Cross is the convergence of two great movements, of God to man and of man to God; God in the person of Jesus Christ offering to man the gift of perfect reconciliation; man in the person of Jesus Christ, offering to God the gift of perfect obedience. God at His divinest, man at his manliest, meet in one and the same act. The Cross comes therefore to us bringing the supreme gift of reconciliation to God and all that that carries with it; it also comes with a supreme demand,—the demand for a full surrender. The gift and the demand always go together. We cannot pick and choose. We have to accept both. Indeed, we cannot accept the gift fully and understandingly without realising that we have to make the surrender; and we shall never be able to make the surrender until we have fully and understandingly appropriated the gift.

I

Let us then speak of the gift. The assumption that every religion in the world

starts out with is that there is something wrong with the world. They do not all diagnose the trouble in the same way; they give different explanations of it; but they all agree that, as they look out upon the world, they see what Newman described as "a heart-piercing, reason-bewildering spectacle." The Christian interpretation of this is that it is the consequence of Sin.

I suppose that there are none of us but have to realise, as we scrutinise our own hearts, that we have frequently suffered moral defeat and failure. We have to acknowledge that, as we test ourselves even in the light of the ordinary conventional standard by which the average man lives, we have been defeated and have failed again and again. But I wonder how many of us have stopped to ask ourselves what the real test is by which we should measure our failure. This, it seems to me, is the first point at which the Cross touches us. What is the Cross? The Cross is the Perfect Man in the perfect act; it is the great ethical high-water mark. And, just because it is the moral achievement of our own flesh and blood it becomes the moral criterion for all

of us. It is a concrete statement, in terms which you and I cannot fail to understand, of our total moral liability, of God's demand upon us. When you and I begin to scrutinise our record in the light of the moral achievement of Jesus Christ, there is not one of us but has to confess that we are totally and irreparably bankrupt, and that we are involved in utter moral insolvency. That is a very serious state of affairs; yet it is not the worst thing to be said about us. We have to know something even more than that before we recognise the real quality of sin. Shall I take an analogy from the Gospels in order to illustrate what I mean? You remember that Jesus once asked his disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" The answer was, "John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." This was a perfectly sound judgment, so far as it went; but, observe, it was the judgment of the natural faculty. Then Jesus asked the disciples what their judgment was, and Peter said, "Thou art the Messiah of God"; and Jesus went on to say, "Flesh and blood" (that is, the natural faculty)

" hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." By the light of the natural faculty it was seen that Jesus was a prophet ; but it was only a revelation that could show the whole truth. I believe that the same thing applies to sin. In the light of the natural faculty we may see ourselves to be utter moral failures, and morally insolvent ; but it requires the light of revelation for us to see ourselves to be sinners. We may by our own faculties know that we have come short of our duty ; but it is in the light of the Holy Spirit that we understand that we have come short of the glory of God. The real difference that the revelation of sin makes to us is just this : when a man finds that he is a moral failure (I speak with some knowledge, because in all this I am simply telling my own story), he does not find it difficult to forgive himself. The real trouble in the moral life of so many of us to-day is that we find it so easy to forgive ourselves. But when once a man has, in the light of the Spirit of God, seen the true character of his sin, he knows that the only hope for him is to be forgiven by God. The essence of sin, as it appears in that

revelation, is this. When a man looks upon Jesus Christ and realises what His love was, and what a difference that love has made in his relation to God, he realises that the very essence of sin is something which Paul calls "enmity against God"; it is personal self-assertion as against God: alienation from God. Sin, on whatever plane you deal with it, must at last be recognised as an affair between persons. It is the rupture of a personal relationship: and we are responsible for it.

II

Now, what is to be done with sin? How should God deal with it? The great fact that we have to remember in this connection is that we are dealing with the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that He could only do with it what love would do; and love would forgive. One of the most difficult things in the world is to forgive. You know the process that goes on in you when you really forgive. When an offence has been committed against you there is immediately a reaction in yourself. If you are going to

forgive you have to check that reaction. Of course, that is only the beginning of forgiveness. I confess that one of the most costly things that I ever have to do is when I am struck to hold myself back and not strike in return. It really means self-negation, self-surrender, self-denial, self-repression. It means this—that I bear the offence with its entire consequences within my own person, as it were. I bear the offence and also the shock of its reaction within myself. I do not visit it on the offender. You cannot forgive an offence without bearing it. There is no forgiveness of sin except at the price of bearing sin. It is always a perilous thing to argue from man to God; but it does seem to me that the same thing applies to Him, and that He cannot forgive sin without bearing it. And here again the Cross comes in. If the Cross means anything at all, it is a revelation to us of God bearing sin—your sin and mine. There is a story told of John Brown of Harper's Ferry, which I should like to repeat. His son had violated one of the household laws, and it was necessary to punish him. John Brown took him into one of the out-houses

of the farm, and the lad waited in fear and trembling while his father went for the strap or the whip. When he came back with it, to the lad's astonishment he took off his own coat and bared his back. Then he put the strap into the boy's hand and said, "Lay it on me." The lad demurred and would not do it at first, but the old man compelled him to lay the strap on his back. That lad never sinned in the same way again. That is what God did on the Cross. He shows us what our sin means to Him—what the recoil of it upon Himself, the shock of enduring it in Himself, means to Him. The Cross is the revelation of God bearing our sin in order that He might forgive us and restore us to Himself. You remember that when the woman came into the house of Simon the Pharisee and broke the alabaster box of ointment upon the Master's feet, He spoke a parable to Simon, the meaning of which is that sin is to be regarded as a bad debt, and the forgiveness of it as the writing off of a bad debt. But one cannot write off a debt without paying it oneself. When a creditor writes off a bad debt he takes it upon himself.

That is what God has done with our sin: He has taken it upon Himself. Somewhere in that cycle is the interpretation of those deep, mysterious words of St Paul: "He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." In some deep, inscrutable way, through some processes in the inner life of God which are translated for us into the idiom of history in the Cross, the barrier between man and God is swept away, the "new and living way" is opened for man to the bosom of the Father, and the Father draws him with cords of love. This is the great gift that God offers and that we all need, because it contains all other gifts in itself. It is the gift of salvation—if you like to call it so. If we give its full content to the word, salvation means not merely the negative thing of saving us from ruin, but the whole process by which we are brought at last to Christlikeness. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" We have security, sufficiency, and abundance of life. "The free gift of

God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." In the Cross we have the great, comprehensive, free gift, given to the world "without money and without price," unmerited, unrequitable, royally given, the gift of God's redeeming grace. We need a fresh realisation of the greatness and the abundance of the freedom of the gift of God to us. He reconciles us to Himself freely in Jesus Christ, and multiplies upon us all that we need, the Cross ever being our assurance that He will withhold from us nothing that we are willing to receive.

III

As I think of the Cross and of its two sides, I realise that, on the one side, there is something in it which is complete. I like the old phrase "the finished work." As a gift of God it is something which was given once for all and never needs to be repeated. But, from the point of view of the obedience of man, it is something which has to be perpetuated and repeated throughout all history; and that sense of debtorship which the acceptance of God's gifts implies, as I understand

it, is the dynamic which drives us to that obedience by and through which the world's redemption is to be completed. We need therefore to gain a true sense of the magnitude, the freedom, and the grace of God's gift. When this has become a reality in our experience, we shall inevitably go forth to render an obedience which will mean in very truth the making up of what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ. For the measure and the direction of this obedience is fixed for us by the Cross. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus . . . who was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."

And it is in such an obedience that the true predestined way of man lies. Broadly speaking, there are two possible moralities open to man. The one is the ethic of self-regard; the other is the ethic of obedience. The former is the burden of Neitzsche—the religion of self-affirmation, the will to power. The other is the way of Jesus, the way of self-renunciation, of sacrifice, the will to obey. The one is the morality of the superman; the other is the ethic of the Son of Man. For, said Jesus, "the Son of Man came not to

be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." And in saying this, and more by doing this, Jesus fixed for ever the true philosophy of human life. No less than He revealed God did He reveal man in the Cross; and it follows that since God and man were revealed in the same act, that the deepest truth of the heart of God is to become the deepest truth of the life of man. It has been said that the Cross is "the ground plan of the Universe." At least it tells us that sacrifice is the deepest principle of the life of God and the ultimate law of the life of man. The Cross rules out entirely a self-regarding ethic. It proclaims plainly that the way of a man is the way of willing and loving obedience.

Thus it was that God intervened redemptively in the affairs of mankind. The Cross is the centre of that intervention, the point at which the redeeming love of God impinged in all its power upon history; and the intervention was redemptive because, first of all, it declared that man was freely reconciled to God and forgiven; and then it sent forth man, forgiven and redeemed, upon an errand

of reconciliation to the world. "God hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ and hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation." And so the redeeming purpose of God is being accomplished in the world. In our penitence, we turn to God to be forgiven and restored; and then, in the harmony of an obedient will, we seek the return of the whole world to the peace of God.

Chapter III

THE ACCEPTANCE OF CHRIST

"I am the Gate."—John x. 9.

It is a truism, often lightly spoken, yet in the last analysis of the utmost consequence to the right disposition of life, that we have only one life to live. Moreover, this life is at best brief and fragile; and the supreme problem for the individual is how one is to make the best of it, how invest it to the greatest advantage, how till it that it may yield the richest harvest. It follows that the first question which a serious-minded person has to face is that of the beginning, of the starting-point. What we make of our lives depends on where we start from. Where, then, shall we start? What is the right beginning?

A couple of generations ago we should have been able to answer this question without very much difficulty. We should have said

that we would begin where our fathers began. We should have taken over their traditions as a sound and unquestioned starting-point. But much water has flowed under London Bridge since that time ; and a generation has arisen which refuses to accept the traditions of the fathers without challenge. Knowledge has made great strides, and in the larger light many of the old standards are in a state of deplorable insecurity. I want to say here that it is mere shallowness which throws over the traditions of the fathers as obsolete lumber ; for it is not their truth which has become obsolete, but their statement of it. And that was inevitable. Truth does not age, but the vesture in which we clothe it does become the worse for wear. At the same time, it is equally shallow to accept the traditions of the fathers without scrutiny. The man who sings—

> "It was good enough for mother,
> And it's good enough for me,"

may be a pious son, but he is going to be a very poor man. We are not going to be carried to heaven on our mothers' laps. We

are called upon to live out our own lives and to accept the entire responsibility. We must find and make our own starting-point; we must deliberately choose it for ourselves.

Now the position is this: We are living in a world in which everything, including ourselves, is obviously transitory. We are here for a time, and then we pass away. Where do we come from? Where are we going to? If we could only discover satisfactory and final answers to these questions, we should be all right. Our problem would be solved. If we knew the port we hailed from and the port we are bound for, then we could fix our course without difficulty. But so far as our natural faculties are concerned these two questions are unanswerable. Our origin and destiny are wrapped in impenetrable mystery. We cannot get back far enough to discover the one, or peer far enough forward to discern the other. We are set on a journey of which we know neither the beginning nor the end. How, then, are we to determine our course?

When a ship is on a voyage, at midday it is the rule to "take the sun." By means of

the sextant it is possible to say precisely the latitude and longitude of the ship, and to mark the spot on the ship's chart. But if it is a cloudy day and the sun is not visible at noon, they have to go about it in another way. They consider the course the ship has followed: they register the distance she has travelled according to the patent log, and they arrive at a calculation of the spot at which the ship is likely to be. But it is only an approximation. They cannot be quite sure of it. They have no means of verifying it. They call it a *dead reckoning*: and for the next twenty-four hours they assume that that was the point at which the ship was at the time of the calculation and they set her course accordingly. On our way in life we have to start with a dead reckoning. We have to make a certain assumption to begin with. We must risk a starting-point. We have no sure clue concerning our port of departure and our destination which enables us to verify it absolutely. We must do our best.

The trouble is that none of the assumptions which we may make are beyond question or challenge. All the speculation of the centuries

has failed to discover any fixed point. There is nothing sure beforehand. From all its excursions, speculative enquiry returns and says it has found nothing sure. And what we all do anyhow (that is, if we are not altogether drifting) is to take a dead reckoning, to accept some proposition, some view, some standpoint, and settle down to it as our port of departure. The particular point we accept may seem to us the most reasonable and the most desirable ; but we fix on it by a deliberate act of will. We say, " This is the foundation on which I am going to build, this is the door by which I shall enter upon life."

Those of us who are not drifting aimlessly begin in that way. We may say that money seems to be the thing which is most worth while, and set out through that gate. Or we may say that culture is the greatest good and then start out from that point. Or we may say that we are in the world to have a good time and that becomes our point of departure. We may make any one of a hundred things our fixed point—fame, power, distinction, pleasure, culture, wealth, learning, experience —but whatever it may be it is the preliminary

acceptance which is going to determine the course and the colour of our life.

But you can never tell how it will end. It is an experiment and an adventure. You are taking a risk. It is purely a dead reckoning. I am thinking, please observe, of the problem of the practical life, of life as a whole. But what I am now saying is true in its measure of intellectual life, of religious thought, of artistic practice and appreciation. We start everywhere with certain premises which we deliberately accept. We refuse, as it were, to go behind them. We constitute them our bedrock. A philosopher may say, "*Man is the measure of all things*," and he will evolve a philosophy of humanism or pragmatism or personal idealism. A religious man may take Verbal Inspiration or the Infallibility of the Church as his starting-point,—wrongly in either case in my judgment,—but they are both acceptances which are open to challenge and are only fixed for the individual by his will. An artist may deliberately accept as his rock-bottom principle, "Art for Art's sake," and he will pay the price. But one and all they start out from certain acceptances which

in no case are beyond challenge, but which they deliberately establish as fixed points for themselves.

So it must be with life as a whole—and the primary message of Christianity to the world is the offer of a starting-point which is applicable to the whole of life, through and through, from top to bottom, a starting-point for thought, whether secular or religious, for artistic endeavour and for moral practice. It urges upon us a certain acceptance as the foundation to build upon, as the threshold by which to enter upon the great adventure of life. That acceptance is the total fact of Christ. Observe that the Gospel does not offer this fact as a certainty. It offers it not to reason but to faith. It offers no proof or demonstration beforehand. It simply urges men to accept Christ. It does not argue about it ; it says to men, *try it.*

I do not say we cannot argue about it if we want to do so. But one argument may be as good as another, and argument does not land you very far in the end. One may say that Christianity is impossible because it involves a belief in miracles ; but the ground

upon which A disbelieves in miracles may appear a mere sinking sand to B. Another man may object to it on the ground that it makes demands which offend reason, but another may quite relevantly ask, Why should reason not be offended? Reason is not sacrosanct or final. M. Bergson says it only comes a poor second to instinct. Here is another man who talks learnedly about the Christ-myth, and he is very plausible until he tries to explain how a dozen or so of unlettered men produced not merely so charming but so revolutionary a myth. In the haze of argument you merely wander round in blind circles; you get nowhere. And the Gospel does not wait to argue. It simply proclaims that only that life which begins with Christ works out right; that only by starting from Christ will life become worth while and yield its best. And the only verification of this claim is experiment. Try it; put it to the proof; see how it works out; and then, the Gospel says, you will not depart from it.

Then just what is it that we have to accept? Jesus Christ in the whole truth of His being, in all that He offers and in all that He demands.

Here is a certain passage of history which gathers around a personality who lives, teaches, heals the sick, trains a following, suffers, dies and rises again from the dead. And the acceptance which the Gospel urges is the acceptance of that total fact by the whole man, the acceptance of it as the determining factor of conduct, the base of thought, the standard of judgment and a criterion and measure of the affairs of life. And this, I take it, is what Jesus means by calling Himself a *Gate.* A gate is a way in, an avenue, a way of approach, an entrance, a beginning. And it is this that Jesus here claims—that He is our way into life, that He is the acceptance which we must make as the foundation and the threshold of true living; our starting-point in the great adventure of life; our port of departure on the momentous voyage on which we are all embarked, a voyage in which a right start makes all the difference between shipwreck and prosperity.

It would be interesting, were this the place, to show how Jesus Christ becomes the gate of thought. I spoke of a philosopher a moment ago who started out with the principle

that man is the measure of all things; that was his gate; and other schools of thought have other gates. But by whatever gate you enter, you come out by it too in the end, as Omar Khayyam found out long ago. But when you lay down the fact of Christ as your starting-point, think out the mystery of life on that basis, when you realise as you ponder on it how the personality and work of Jesus contain a revelation of God and of man which is a clue to a score of problems and a refuge from another score, you begin to feel you are covering the ground. Robert Browning said long ago:

> "I say the acknowledgement of God in Christ
> Accepted by thy reason,
> Solves for thee all problems on the earth
> And out of it."

That may be. I cannot say. I confess I have still unsolved problems and unanswered questions. I am only a thinker in a small way, and it is presumptuous that I should bear witness. But for what it is worth, here it is. I have been through the mill of doubt; I have been lost in the maze of speculation;

I have wandered in search of a clue to the mystery of things, and I found none—until the day when I found in Christ a new starting-point for my thinking. He became my Gate into such truth, such certainty, such assurance as I profess; and though my way in many things is beset by darkness, He has already led me into so much that I have faith that at last He will lead me into all the truth.

But it is of more consequence that we should know that Christ is the gate to conduct, to the life of action. To accept Him as Lord in the region of moral practice is the first step to right and fruitful conduct. That He shall be the moral sovereign to whom we shall render obedience, the criterion by which we shall test our motives, the standard by which we shall judge our actions and desires, that we shall follow Him in the conduct of our lives—this it is to accept Christ, to have him for our "gate" into the affairs of life. We accept His scale of values as our own; His way of life as the model and touchstone of ours; His obedience to the will of God as the measure of our obedience to Himself; His teaching as the interpreter and guide in the matters of spiritual and moral

practice. And there is not one of us who does not find an echo in his soul declaring that this is as it should be. Our consciences acclaim the moral sovereignty of Jesus Christ, and what is required is that our wills accept it. He is ethically the highest we know; anything less than His sovereignty is second best and we cannot afford to squander the only life we have on a second best. But, we may ask dubiously, is it possible? Is it practicable? That is not the question. The question is, Is it right? And if it is right, we must take the plunge and the consequences. We may fail, but it is greater and more splendid to fail in attempting the right than to make a complete success of a compromise.

Try it, that is the Christian message. And it is verified by the trial. The first thing that happens is the verification of conscience. You discover at once that it fits. Your conscience acclaims it. But that is only the beginning. And I want to show you as briefly as I can what follows.

"*If any man enter in by Me, he shall be saved.*"

The acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord

introduces you to Christ the Saviour. In this there is much that I may not touch upon now. But in this passage I think the emphasis is upon the security of the soul which enters in by the gate. Security is something we are all seeking. We are for ever putting or trying to put ourselves beyond the reach of the long arm of danger and mischance. But we know that with all our endeavour we stand in jeopardy every hour. Our life is a fragile and precarious affair at the best, and none of the barricades with which we fence our lives about are impenetrable. Mere physical security we shall never attain. But there is a security which we may, and it is infinitely more precious ; we may gain *moral* security. The counterpart of the figure of the Gate of the fold is the Shepherd of the sheep. And the Shepherd of the sheep says that they hear His voice and follow Him : " And I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, and no man shall be able to pluck them out of My hand." And this is the guarantee He gives of our security—" The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." Will you suffer another witness of my own. I am a

man of the commonest clay, of more than ordinary frailty, of more than ordinary amenability to temptation . . . and up to this day I am conscious of being a man who has been kept, and often (the more is the shame) kept in spite of himself. The Lord is my Keeper. There is no doubt of that. Everyone who has tried Him has found Him so. He shall be saved,—so runs the promise,—saved from dishonour, disgrace, shame, remorse, moral collapse, saved from very perdition. And it is true to-day as when Paul declared that neither life nor death, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. "He shall be saved," that is, if he enter in. Accept Jesus Christ and you find a Saviour. To accept Him as Lord is to surrender to Him all that you are and have; to find Him a Saviour is to know that He will give you all that you require.

"*He shall go in and out.*" Another thing we want is freedom, spaciousness. We all want plenty of room. Perhaps our commonest complaint about life is that it is narrow,

circumscribed, cramped. And in these days of specialisation when most of us are set to do little bits of work and to do them over and over again, the narrowness of the routine cramps and paralyses us utterly. I do not wonder when I hear that Smith or Brown has got tired of the city or the shop and has gone forth to seek space and emancipation in the broad plains of another continent. There is a restlessness in us which demands range, space, but of all futile things, to imagine that we can get more space by a change of environment is the most futile. The man who is cramped in the city will soon or late feel cramped on the prairie. The only spaciousness of life that is genuine and abiding is that which comes within us, when our minds become a continent and our souls a universe. And that comes with our surrender to Jesus Christ. He is not only Saviour, but emancipator and liberator. He will transfigure the dull narrow routine into a splendid highway; He will give us the franchise of a kingdom of boundless wealth; He will break the bands and fetters of routine and make the most stuffy vocation a palace of great

possibilities. He himself becomes our universe in which henceforth we live and move and have our being.

Security, then, and spaciousness. Let me continue my alliteration for the third, *Sufficiency.* "*He shall find pasture.*"

And this is indeed the gate by which a man entering in is assured of sufficiency. Superfluity is not in the promise, but sufficiency is. Let him go in by the gate of fame, ambition, wealth, and he gains not sufficiency but scarcity, not food but a famine, not satisfaction but a growing hunger. Listen to this: "I know from experience the intellectual distractions of scientific research, philosophical speculation and artistic pleasures; but am also well aware that even when all are taken together and well-sweetened to taste, in respect of consequent reputation, means, social position, etc., the whole concoction is but as high confectionery to a starving man."[1] This is the testimony of a man who was forced back at last upon the Gate which is Christ; and there he found sufficiency, enough to live upon. This is the unbroken witness of all

[1] G. J. Romanes, "Thoughts on Religion," pp. 150 f.

who have entered in by this Gate ; and it was a man who had gone in by this Gate who declared that he had learned whatever state he was in, therein to be content,—wanting nothing. The experience of St Paul is confirmed by all the saints ; and no man yet has found Jesus Christ come short of His word.

Security, spaciousness, sufficiency—here are our deepest needs. Jesus Christ stands or falls according to His ability to supply these needs as He promises. But this must be put to the test of personal experiment. One must try Him and give Him His opportunity, and that indeed is all that He asks. And one finds that the "dead reckoning" of to-day becomes the midday sun of every subsequent morrow.

Chapter IV

THE LIFE IN CHRIST

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."—
John xiv. 6.

I observe that Dr Moffatt, in his "New Translation of the New Testament," renders this passage, "I am the real and living way." He has, no doubt, reasons for this rendering which I am not qualified to challenge, but I question whether it conveys all that Jesus meant. I cannot divest myself of the feeling that there is a deliberate intention in representing Jesus as using three separate nouns and not one noun and two adjectives. I therefore prefer the traditional rendering. But with this exception. In the passage, "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," Dr Moffatt substitutes *Reality* for *Truth*. This, I think, simplifies the passage I have just read. There is no doubt that a philosopher might

urge formidable arguments against the identification of Truth and Reality; but most of us would not understand the argument or see the real force of the distinctions. To the average mind Truth and Reality are virtually synonymous. Let us then read the passage, "I am the Way, the Reality, the Life," and accept from it (as a preacher would naturally do) three obvious heads for our present discussion.

I

I AM THE WAY

In the previous address I tried to point out that the Christian life began in an acceptance, in an act of faith, by which we made Christ the starting-point of our life. I used the figure of "dead reckoning" at sea, the device by which sailors on a sunless day fix on an approximate point from which to direct their course for the next twenty-four hours. And I finished the address with the words: "The dead-reckoning of to-day becomes the midday sun of every subsequent morrow." To-day's faith becomes to-morrow's certainty.

That is the point at which I want now to begin.

The man who sets out through the gate which is Christ, the man who makes Christ his starting-point, discovers that he has found a settled principle and norm of life. I tried to point out that the acceptance of Christ receives the swift and unmistakable approval of one's conscience. We know immediately that we have done the right thing when we have accepted Him. Christ, once accepted, receives this sure moral response and embrace in our souls. But what speedily appears to the man who has gone a little way is that he finds that he has accepted something which fits and which works. The acceptance of Christ was an experiment, but the experiment has verified and authenticated itself. One goes in by this Gate ; and having gone in one finds a sure Way.

Now observe that this way is not a code of rules or laws ; not a set of propositions ; not a document, or a theology or an ethical system ; it is not a manual of conduct—it is a personality like our own. It is not a theory, but a concrete actuality in the shape of a living

person. It is not a track marked out on a chart, but the very road itself. It is easy to see the advantage of this. You are called upon to perform a certain task; and you receive verbal or written instructions how to do it. That is very good, of course; but it is nothing like so good as it would be to see some one else actually do it first. To His chosen people God gave a law written on tablets of stone, a moral directory, an ethical Baedeker; but to us He has given a Way embodied in an actual personality, and this personality becomes Guide, Standard, Principle, Interpreter of life to us. It is all there in Him, and He becomes the settled Law by which we come to direct and conduct our lives.

But let us remember that Jesus is not the way merely in the sense of His being our example and model. It is not that He by His own life mapped out a road along which we should travel. That is, of course, generally true. But the way He went was the way of one, born a Galilean peasant, yet sent with a commission to save the world. His actual way of life cannot be ours, but His Spirit may become ours. And what He does

for us is not to lay out a fixed route along which we have all to travel, but to guide each one of us in that separate road to which each one of us is appointed. He is our Guide, not outside of us conducting us along the road He travelled, but within us showing us *our* way. The trouble with the Jewish Law was that it was a fixed code of regulations; it had no elasticity; and life is so various and incalculable an affair, and the world we live in is so tangled and labyrinthine a place, that no fixed code can ever cover it. Unusual situations are always arising—as Jesus showed in the Fifth of Matthew—for which a rigid code of law can provide no direction; and what we want is some personal inward guidance which will enable us to carry ourselves rightly in any situation that may arise. You cannot live according to pattern; you cannot fit the single life on to a moral "bed of Procrustes." We have to thread our own way through life, and what we want is not a map of life, but a clear head-light. That is what Jesus Christ becomes by His indwelling. He becomes our Way in so much as He becomes our inner light by which we are enabled to choose our

steps and to steer a straight course through the confusing wilderness of the world.

But He is even more than that. Being domiciled within us, the Christ not only is a light to show the way but the power to travel it. It were an ill service indeed to us to show what step we should take and leave us impotent to take it. The equipment of a tramway system involves not only guiding lines all the way, but power all the way. And to us Jesus is both guiding line and power. And that, I think, is a fact we are far too apt to forget. It is no cowardice, but, I think, a genuine sense of weakness, which leads us to quail and retreat before the exacting demands of the law of Christ. "It is high," we say, "I cannot attain unto it," and that is true so long as we have only our own powers to rely upon. Often enough the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. "The good I would do, that I do not,"—that is the story of all of us. You remember Emerson's lines:

> "So near is grandeur to our dust,
> So nigh is God to man,
> When duty whispers low, 'Thou must,'
> The youth replies, 'I can.'"

But that is just what the youth does not say. He says, "I can't, the thing is impossible; it is utterly beyond me." And what is more, when you come to the highest reaches of moral obligation, the youth is right. It *is* beyond him. But it is not beyond Christ, and it is not beyond the youth either when Christ is in him. "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." That is the genuine Christian witness. Somebody raised a question once in the presence of John Smith of Harrow, that godly soul who was Master of the Fourth Form, whether somebody would or could do some difficult thing. "Why not," asked John Smith, "he is a Christian." And I am not at all sure whether this consciousness of invincible power is not in the end the true test of genuine personal Christianity. The Spirit of Christ gives sure guidance, but the Spirit of Christ also gives limitless power: and He sets none of us on an undertaking without giving us at the same time the strength to carry it through.

II

I AM REALITY

A life lived on these terms brings us to *Reality*—not, of course, as a stage on the road, but as a continuous and increasing experience. What we mean by reality is something ultimate, something we cannot go behind, something that cannot be questioned. To experience reality is to have the sense of being settled on bedrock. And we all recognise this as something we are all craving for. We are living in a world in which everything is transitory, in a state of flux—and not the east ourselves. We are always trying to find something stable and immovable, a fixed point to which to attach ourselves, and we know the kind of peace and satisfaction which comes when we think we have found something of that kind. That is why we make creeds. We find experience and opinion to be elusive, uncertain,—and so we try to fix it, crystallising it in a form of words. But we know—or, at any rate, if we do not harden our minds as well, we know—that there is no fixity in creeds or formal statements of any kind. The best

we can get to is a theory, a hypothesis, a tentative and provisional formula. The kind of solid reality which we want to stand on comes in another way.

There is a school of philosophy which holds that the world is merely an appearance, whereas the only reality is the idea that is behind the world. Everything in the world has its ideal pattern somewhere outside the world, in the Absolute mind which is behind it all. Reality belongs not to the thing seen, but to the unseen idea. And this school is the most persistent and vital of all the schools, because, I think, it has most truth behind it. And for us while we would not deny some kind of reality to the things we see—they are real and very real to us—we have gone beyond the point at which they are the only realities. We too, like the idealist philosophers, believe that the ultimate realities are spiritual, and therefore invisible. Bedrock is not here, but over there beyond the frontiers of the seen. Here we are living on the outsides of things, amid a ceaseless flux, a precarious and uncertain life at best—but we believe that there is a kingdom which cannot be

moved, solid, impregnable, standing for ever untouched by the fretting and breaking of the restless waves of time. And it is possible to get there ; and this is the *Way*. St Paul has a deep word about our life being hidden with Christ in God — hidden, that is, from sight but not from experience. And he to whom Christ is the Way becomes aware of it. He becomes conscious of being established, rooted, grounded in the Immovable and the Immutable. It grows on Him that he has found and is settled on bedrock, a bedrock hidden from the world but of which he becomes more sure than anything else in the world. It is the glorious sense of having got there, of having arrived, of being henceforth for ever beyond the reach of the changes and mischances of an uncertain world. It may be beyond one's power to define the knowledge or to cast the experience into words, but there is no doubt about it. Here we have touched and settled on reality—the changeless bedrock of the sum of things.

One has nothing to show for it to the world, of course : and to the worldling it will, for all our telling, seem no more than an illusion and

a fancy. But the illusion is all on his side. There is a word in one of Jack London's stories about some people in the Arctic Circle who "could not see the sun because of the bulge of the world": and there are a great many people who live in the illusion that the sun is not there because they cannot see it on account of the bulge of the world. He who lives only for the things this world can give is sowing the seeds of a bitter harvest. He is preparing for himself a cruel and brutal awakening. When the house of cards he built with his wealth comes tumbling down in a contemptible heap, when he goes down into the last river with no stay save the rope of sand which he wove out of his pleasures,—he will then see who it was that played at make-believe and lived in a fool's paradise. To accept Christ for our Gate, to take Him for our Way, is to find that Reality and to be grounded in it—that Reality which abides when this world and its show is done for for ever, and which puts us until then beyond its power to hurt us. It is to find that Rock on which we shall be able to stand, come storm come shine, until this encasing and limiting world of

matter is dissolved away and we shall find ourselves standing on the bedrock of eternity in our Father's home.

III

AND THIS IS LIFE: THE LIFE INDEED

What is life? Who can say? But I fancy that most of us would say that it is something we have not yet—at least fully—attained to. There is in us a sort of expectation that some day we shall come to a door or a turning in the lane which will lead us into our own kingdom —to the great opportunity for which we have been waiting. Then we shall really begin to live. We have the sense that we are not just now in our proper setting, but that there is to be a turn of the tide in our affairs which will make everything different. This life we are now living is a provisional, tentative affair: we are, as it were, just marking time. But away in the offing there is a partnership, or marriage, or a university degree: and then when that has come we are going to begin.

This is a natural feeling; but the truth is

that when you have reached the one point of your hope, you then begin to wait for another to turn up. On this basis you will never begin to live at all. The truth I have discovered for myself is just this—that unless I am going to master the secret of a full life *now*, I shall never master it. It is no use waiting for something to turn up before you begin to realise life. And life may be as full for the clerk as for the partner, for the law student as for the Lord Chancellor, if he chooses to make it so. The great thing is to get life into its own setting; and you do not have to wait for that. For the one setting in which life can achieve fulness is not any opportunity that the world can give us, but a relationship which we can establish here and now. Life attains its true setting when it has found and is settled on Reality . . . and the one Reality we can know is Christ.

We all know something of the joy of life. When we are in perfect health and full vigour, when the nervous and physical strain of city life is relaxed, when two or three days of fresh mountain air has cleansed and restored our tissues—well, you know the glorious

response you make in your whole being to the invitation and the challenge of nature round about you. For most of us this joy of perfect physical life is remembered as an occasional oasis in the desert. But there is a joy of life which is independent of the merely physical and material environment, a joy infrangible and inalienable, for it is grounded in eternity, that life to which nothing is lacking. I said in the previous address that a perfect life required security, space, sufficiency—and it is the insecurity, the narrowness, the inadequacy of resources which handicap and impoverish our joy of life. But here is a life to which all these things are promised—and the promise is always kept. Ask those who have tried it. "To me," says Paul, "to live is Christ," and that is enough, fulness and joy for ever more. And what St Paul said is echoed down the ages by generation after generation of the saints, whose witness is ever the same. Ask them, Where is life? What is life? And they have no other word for it. To me to live is Christ, Christ who is Gate, Way, Reality, Life.

Does it mean that to you? you may ask

me bluntly. Well, I can answer you thus. It is getting to mean that. It certainly is on the way; more than the promise of it is here; and I live in the hope that when I am as old a man as St Paul, whatever my condition, I shall be able to answer without hesitation or reserve—To me to live is Christ. It is hard to be cleansed of everything that resists the sovereignty of Christ. It takes longer to do so with some than with others: and it is a slow business in me. But I see enough to know what I may hope for, and I am not without strong hope that I may be able to say:

"Yea, through life, death, through sorrow and through sinning,
Christ shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed;
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
Christ is the beginning, for the end is Christ."

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